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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA HOSTS OAS TIP CONFERENCE;
CONDEMNS DEMAND

Ref: 07 Buenos Aires 300

¶1. (U) Summary. The Argentine government recently hosted the Organization of American States (OAS) Second Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons (TIP), which included representatives from governments, international organizations and civil society organizations. As head of the U.S. delegation, Ambassador Wayne delivered the USG national statement, stressing our commitment to working with regional partners to fight TIP. Argentina was heavily focused on addressing demand for commercial sexual exploitation and advocating for a new OAS regional action plan on TIP. During the conference, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) addressed the OAS delegates stressing the need for governments and civil society to work together to fight TIP and calling on OAS governments to address the demand for commercial sex by punishing clients. CFK also gave an award to Argentine TIP activist Susana Trimarco for her efforts to fight TIP. To raise public awareness of this important conference, post succeeded in placing an op-ed in the pro-government, generally anti-U.S. paper "Pagina 12" praising the region's leadership in combating TIP while noting there is much work to be done to dismantle TIP networks. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Organization of American States (OAS) held its Second Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Buenos Aires, Argentina on March 25-27. The conference, a follow-up to the 2006 OAS TIP meeting in Venezuela, was co-hosted by the governments of Argentina and Uruguay and included representatives from governments, international organizations and civil society organizations. Ambassador Wayne led the U.S. delegation, which included Department officials G/TIP Carla Menares-Bury and USOAS Dan Cento, Department of Justice official Hilary Aham, ICE Attache Stephen Kleppe, and post's TIP coordinator Heidi Gomez. The Ambassador delivered the USG national statement which discussed U.S. anti-TIP efforts and challenges and stressed USG commitment to working with regional partners to fight TIP.

GOA Outlines Anti-TIP Efforts

13. (U) Throughout the conference, the GOA gave several presentations outlining steps taken to combat TIP since passing anti-TIP legislation in 2008. Argentina's 45-minute national statement noted the GOA's creation of a First Responder Unit to coordinate TIP investigations, raids and victim's assistance; the formation of specialized anti-TIP units in each of its four law enforcement agencies; the establishment of a special TIP unit in the Prosecutor General's office; and the development of an inter-agency working group to improve coordination of anti-TIP efforts. The GOA noted the importance of regional cooperation in fighting transnational trafficking, and advocated the use of Ibero-American Prosecutors Network for information exchange on regional TIP activity. The GOA also gave a presentation on recent police raids of brothels that resulted in the arrest of TIP perpetrators and the rescue of several TIP victims.

CFK: Anti-TIP efforts Must Also Fight Demand

14. (U) President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, presented a plaque to TIP activist Susana Trimarco (2007 TIP Hero and International Woman of Courage Award Winner - reftel), an Argentine mother of a trafficked victim who launched an NGO and a campaign to push for stronger legislation and law enforcement efforts to fight TIP. CFK subsequently addressed conference participants on the need for governments and civil society to work together to combat TIP.

She stressed that fighting TIP is not just a matter of law enforcement, but a matter of human rights. She stated that she did not come to address the OAS conference "out of courtesy," but to raise public awareness of a problem that has been invisible for a long time. CFK spoke exclusively on sex trafficking, and noted that anti-TIP policies should address the demand side as well by punishing clients. She urged participants to focus on developing policies to fight the crime, saying that "otherwise, it's an academic discussion." She acknowledged that it will be difficult to "eradicate human trafficking, but we must continue the fight." She said each woman and child that is rescued from traffickers is a victory in the permanent struggle for human rights. Supporting CFK's message were Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana and Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez, present for nearly the entire meeting.

15. (U) Throughout the negotiations in Washington of the conference's outcome document, the Argentine delegation was very supportive of every U.S. proposal, even helping us to counter efforts by other delegations to weaken the document. Among the outcome document's most significant conclusions were the call for an OAS work plan on TIP and the establishment of country indicators to measure the effectiveness of national anti-TIP efforts.

Ambassador Op-ed Praises OAS Leadership, Notes Challenges

16. (U) To draw public attention to this important conference, post placed an op-ed in the GOA-friendly, leftist paper "Pagina 12," an Embassy first. The paper is the most ideologically anti-U.S. paper in the country. The op-ed praised the region's leadership in fighting TIP and noted where challenges remain, such as fighting official corruption and increasing convictions. The op-ed helped send a very clear signal to the GOA and the Argentine public on the importance that the USG

places on fighting this scourge.

17. This message was cleared by G/TIP Carla Menares-Bury and WHA/OAS Dan Cento.

WAYNE